



## 5 Things Cities Can Do

City leaders know their cities thrive when their residents are healthy and financially secure. When families have health insurance, the burden on hospital emergency rooms is reduced, families avoid the sky-high medical debt that often results in a financial crisis, and children are healthier, which means parents take less time off of work to care for sick kids. City leaders therefore have a vested interest in seeing their residents covered and are uniquely positioned to reach families to share information about Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The National League of Cities' (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a national partner working alongside the Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign since 2012 to help spread the word about Medicaid and CHIP to families, works with city leaders to support efforts such as access to health coverage to improve outcomes for children and families.

Through its YEF Institute, NLC worked closely with eight cities over a three-year period (between 2013 and 2015) to design and implement city-led Medicaid and CHIP outreach and enrollment campaigns. The [Cities Expanding Health Access for Children and Families \(CEHACF\)](#) initiative shows that cities can help move the needle on health coverage in their communities. Working in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) and local enrollment experts, these campaigns led to more than 20,000 enrollments and 5,000 renewals in Medicaid and CHIP for low-income children and their parents. CEHACF cities have demonstrated how outreach and enrollment strategies can be embedded into their municipal infrastructure. NLC has compiled learnings from the CEHACF initiative into the [Cities Promoting Health Care Coverage for Children and Families: A Municipal Action Guide](#). The Campaign has collaborated with NLC to offer the tips below which outline five ways to help reach and enroll children into Medicaid and CHIP by engaging city and local leaders as partners:

### 1. Engage local elected officials to use their bully pulpit to help educate and direct families to application assistance.

City leaders can help educate and reach families who may not be aware of the availability of free or low-cost coverage. Local elected leaders can use their "bully pulpit" to serve as champions and messengers to share educational information and local enrollment assistance opportunities. Mayors in [Pittsburgh](#) and [Garden City, MI](#) both recorded public service announcements discussing the importance of health coverage and shared local enrollment information, which were aired as a preview to summer movies in city parks and on the local public access channel, respectively. City leaders can also attract local media to cover events and help to highlight efforts. Local media in Hattiesburg, MS covered the mayor as he knocked on residents' doors in a local housing complex to help spread the word about enrollment events.



Local leaders are interested in seeing and hearing about how community members are working to make their communities vibrant. Reach out to elected officials to share updates and invite them to attend events and see the work that is being done. Develop a short list on how local leaders can help support the effort—for example, offer sample tweets and social media posts, ask for their attendance at specific events, or share talking points that can be included in their speeches.

## **2. Integrate cities into your efforts as a catalyst and convener.**

City leaders can play an important role in convening and coordinating partners and stakeholders to work together toward a shared vision and goal. Whether it is a new effort in the city or there are multiple organizations working within a community on outreach and enrollment efforts, cities can provide leadership for setting and achieving goals by convening, guiding, or funding partners. In New Bedford, MA, the city's health department brought together two trusted local partners—the public school district and a community health center—to achieve their campaign goals. Combining the reach and access into the community with municipal leadership and resources, the campaign was successful in proactively identifying families in need of coverage and connecting them to enrollment.

## **3. Involve cities in supporting far-reaching marketing and outreach efforts.**

City leaders and agencies are well-placed to support outreach and awareness campaigns with the ability to reach large audiences. Cities can help support mass marketing efforts to spread outreach messages on city buses, in city buildings, on city websites and social media pages, and at city-sponsored events like education and job fairs. Cities can also incorporate messages into existing campaigns—like those promoting [vaccinations](#), [youth literacy](#), or [physical fitness](#)—or they can develop a health coverage-specific campaign. Pittsburgh developed the *Healthy Together* brand and created the Enroll-o-bot mascot to support their city-wide outreach and enrollment effort. The brand and mascot were featured on marketing materials such as children's games, event flyers, and social media posts helping to generate awareness across the community. The city has since expanded the use of the mascot to support their broader [Live Well Pittsburgh](#) initiative, continuing to promote healthy and nutritious diets and exercise.

## **4. Target outreach through city agencies.**

Along with neighborhood and community organizations, city agencies are another resource to help target outreach to the children and families they regularly reach. CEHACF cities leveraged the reach of traditional departments like parks and recreation and workforce development offices to identify youth through summer camp and summer employment registrations, and they placed enrollment assistors at Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics.

However, many different city agencies regularly engage with families and may be receptive and willing to help outreach and enrollment efforts. Think through where and how families are engaging with city agencies to help identify families that might be eligible but not enrolled, and meet them where they are. Savannah, GA reached out to their juvenile court officers recognizing that youth—particularly those mandated for behavioral health services—may be in need of coverage. Court officers welcomed the connection to enrollment assistance, as health coverage had been an unmet need and they had not been aware of the city's efforts to provide enrollment assistance. Proactively seek out city agencies and let them know what outreach and enrollment services are available for their families.

City agencies can also help reach families to share outreach messages, often at low or no-cost. Ask agencies to share outreach flyers and marketing materials at their offices and various events, or in their materials they deliver to families. Discovering that inserting an additional flyer into utility bills didn't raise the cost of the mailings, in Garden City the utility company agreed to include campaign outreach materials alerting residents of coverage availability and enrollment assistance locations.

City agencies have a reach into communities beyond what some community organizations may have. Invite city agency staff to partner and planning meetings to help identify where their reach can best be tapped.



## 5. **Work with city staff to directly enroll families and share information broadly.**

Enrollment assistance, though not typically a municipal government function, can be added to the bundle of services a city provides to its residents. Cities can invest in training of agency staff to become certified application counselors so that they can provide enrollment assistance directly. Once they receive the necessary training, city staff can enroll children and adults at enrollment events and sites located throughout the community or offer enrollment assistance directly at a municipal office. City staff in Garden City became trained application assistors and now provide enrollment assistance, in addition to services such as food and tax assistance, at the city's Community Resources Department.

Local community partners can also step in to engage with cities in these training efforts, or to provide backup enrollment assistance at city and local events. Organizations can share existing resources such as brochures or rack cards (download Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign print resources from [InsureKidsNow.gov](https://insurekidsnow.gov)!) with city officials to pass along to families as they are working with them in other capacities, helping to set up a trusted referral network in the community.

City leaders and agencies are valuable resources to engage and help support outreach and enrollment efforts. To find out more, see NLC's [Cities Promoting Health Care Coverage for Children and Families: A Municipal Action Guide](#), which provides more information about creative and successful city outreach and enrollment strategies from the CEHACF initiative. You can also learn more in the [Mathematica Policy Research evaluation](#) of the CEHACF initiative, or by visiting the National League of Cities [website](#).

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